

St Mary's Bluecoat CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123536
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340361
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Shaw
Headteacher	Sue Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
School address	Lodge Lane The Grove Bridgnorth WV15 5EQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with staff, pupils and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data on pupils' performance, including their current progress, safeguarding records, plans for the future, and records of the school's own monitoring of its performance. The responses to 40 parent questionnaires were considered, alongside responses from staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether apparent improvements in standards and progress are firmly embedded across the school
- why pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported on 'school action plus' or who have a statement of special educational needs appear to make faster progress than other pupils
- the accuracy of assessment of more able pupils.

Information about the school

St Mary's Bluecoat serves an area to the north of Bridgnorth. Around 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Twenty per cent of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and just over 2% have a statement of special educational needs. Just over 4% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background.

The number on roll increases significantly each January when more children join the nursery. Most of these children have attended the St Mary's Bluecoat Playgroup that shares the same site and provides clubs before and after school. The playgroup is managed privately and is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. There have been many staff changes since the school was last inspected. The school holds the Activemark award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Mary's Bluecoat is a rapidly improving school that is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. Standards dipped after the school was last inspected, because pupils were not making as much progress as they should. The headteacher introduced systems for tracking pupils' progress that allowed an accurate evaluation of where weaknesses needed to be tackled. Successful actions were taken to improve the provision, so standards and results improved considerably in 2009. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress across the school and standards are broadly average. Such improvement reflects the school's satisfactory self-evaluation and capacity to take the school to the next level.

The improvement in standards of writing has been particularly good, because staff have all made a concerted effort to improve their teaching in this area. The same is now happening for pupils' calculation skills, although improvement is not as marked in mathematics because middle and higher ability boys are not making as much progress as they could. They work well when directly supervised, but quickly lose concentration and start to distract others when working on their own. This is despite the work generally being well matched to their ability. Progress is also slower, although still satisfactory, in science and information and communication technology (ICT). The changes in staffing have left science without a manager, so pupils' progress is not tracked as well as in other subjects and there has not been the same drive for improvement. The school's own evaluations show that pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not have enough opportunities to plan and carry out their own experiments, and this was confirmed by inspectors. Pupils make steady progress in learning new ICT skills, but the school does not have enough computers to allow pupils to practise their skills in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported on 'school action plus' or who have a statement of special educational needs make good progress, because their education is well planned and they receive highly focussed support in lessons.

Pupils generally enjoy coming to school, especially for the many sporting activities. These, together with the school's good provision for teaching about health, ensure that pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and put their knowledge into practice. Pupils know they have someone to turn to in school if they have any problems, and the school is particularly good in ensuring that pupils are kept safe.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of middle and higher ability boys from satisfactory to good by ensuring that teachers keep them working as hard as possible when they are supposed to be working independently.
- Improve progress in science in Years 3 to 6 from satisfactory to good by:
 - allocating responsibility for the subject to an appropriate manager who can ensure that pupils' progress is tracked accurately and that weaknesses in provision are identified and tackled more rigorously
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to plan, carry out and record their own investigations.
- Improve progress in ICT from satisfactory to good by increasing the number of computers and providing more opportunities for pupils to make use of their ICT skills in other subjects.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children usually start nursery with skills and knowledge that are as expected for their age, although there are a few who are further behind. They make satisfactory progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest of the school, and leave Year 6 soundly prepared for their next stage of education and with standards that are average. When pupils' progress, standards and enjoyment are taken together, overall achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enjoyed the lessons observed by inspectors and learning was satisfactory, although there were some differences between different groups of pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported on 'school action plus' or who have a statement of special educational need learn more than other pupils and make good progress. They invariably have teaching assistants working alongside them, who are well informed about the type of help that each pupil needs and keep such pupils working hard for the full lesson. However, others with special educational needs and/or disabilities make less progress because planning for their individual needs is not as well focussed. Boys make slightly less progress than girls in mathematics, because they do not concentrate as well and can distract other pupils. Behaviour outside of lessons is satisfactory. Pupils are polite and welcoming, but behaviour can become overly boisterous at lunchtimes. Pupils eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. School and packed lunches are well balanced, although some lunch boxes contain a few too many sweets or crisps. The school council plays a good role in putting forward ideas, but pupils play a limited part in the wider community. The views expressed by pupils showed that they have a clear set of moral values, but their understanding of life in multicultural Britain is less well developed.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The main factor that prevents teaching being good is the way that different groups are not always kept on task in lessons. This is most noticeable in mathematics. Teachers prepare their lessons well, with work that is well matched to the needs of pupils of differing ability. Introductions ensure that all pupils know what they are to be doing but sometimes go on for a bit too long. Pupils working in small groups according to their ability, get on well when they are supervised directly by a teacher or teaching assistant. They concentrate hard and are prompted to think by carefully worded questions. Groups that are left to get on with a task, often middle and higher ability pupils, make less progress than they should. The girls in these groups will work quietly, but the boys are slow to settle and are easily distracted. Teachers do not always check on the progress of such pupils sufficiently frequently. Assessments, including those of higher ability pupils, are accurate and provide a good basis for teachers' planning. Marking is frequent and regular, but does not always identify how pupils can improve their work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported on 'school action plus' or who have a statement of special educational need have detailed 'individual education plans' (IEPs) so they know what they need to do to improve, and their teaching assistants know how to support them. The IEPs for other pupils with special educational needs are not of the same quality and so these pupils' progress is not as good. The annual reviews for pupils with a statement of special educational need are particularly detailed and effective. Most pupils are happy with the support and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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guidance they receive. However, some pupils and parents are rightly concerned that lunchtime supervisors do not take action swiftly enough to tackle over boisterous behaviour at lunchtimes. Children from St Mary's Bluecoat Playgroup join the school for lunch, which helps them to settle more quickly when they start nursery.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have improved the systems for checking the quality of what it provides, so that weaknesses are now accurately identified and concerted actions to address them are proving successful. The impact of such actions is still not fully evaluated, in order to accelerate the rate of improvement. Staff say that morale is high, as everyone is working together to provide a better education for the pupils. The many changes in senior management have meant that progress in some areas, notably science, have been slower than others. The budget is now better managed, so the school has money available to invest in more computers. Governors meet their statutory requirements and are very supportive of the school. They have yet to play a full part in monitoring the quality of provision. The school's leaders gain an accurate picture of pupils' progress, both overall and for some groups. However, they recognise the scope for greater depth of analysis, including year on year analyses, in order to ensure that all groups are achieving equally well. Discrimination is tackled well, especially through challenging pupils' perceptions of what racism is and how it can impact on individuals. The school meets requirements for community cohesion. There is a good focus on improving pupils' understanding of different faiths, but less time is spent helping them to learn about other cultures represented in Britain today. Systems for safeguarding pupils are robust. The school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work and policies are regularly reviewed by governors. The school has satisfactory links with parents, but these are better in the Early Years Foundation Stage where parents are now involved in planning activities for their children.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	3

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school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle very quickly into the nursery because staff reinforce routines at every opportunity so that children are given clear boundaries and rules. They make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and start Year 1 with standards that are as expected for their age, except in writing where they are lower. The manager is aware of this weakness and has increased the opportunities for writing in lessons, although this has not been consistently extended to activities that the children choose for themselves. Children enjoy themselves in lessons and their learning is satisfactory. It is better in the lessons led by adults than those initiated by the children. In these latter lessons some groups are encouraged to learn more through careful interactions with an adult, while others are left too long without such support. Assessments are accurate and provide a good basis for teachers' planning, especially in literacy and numeracy. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage has experienced the same disruption as the rest of the school. As a result, standards and progress have been maintained but there is no clear plan of how improvement is to be accelerated. Links with parents are improving rapidly however, most notably through the joint planning of activities which gives parents a greater insight into what goes on at school and how they can help their child learn at home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. A few are concerned about behaviour. Inspectors agree with parents views. Behaviour

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can become a little rowdy at lunchtimes when supervisors do not act quickly enough to nip it in the bud.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Bluecoat CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	45%	20	50%	2	5%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	18	45%	20	50%	2	5%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	28%	24	60%	2	5%	1	3%
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	23%	24	62%	2	5%	1	3%
The teaching is good at this school	14	35%	24	60%	1	3%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	23%	25	63%	3	8%	1	3%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	28%	29	73%	0	0%	0	0%
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	18%	23	58%	4	10%	1	3%
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	30%	21	53%	3	8%	1	3%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	23%	18	45%	6	15%	1	3%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	25%	14	35%	5	13%	2	5%
The school is led and managed effectively	9	23%	20	50%	5	13%	1	3%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	40%	18	45%	4	10%	0	0%

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Bluecoat CofE Primary School, Bridgnorth, WV15 5EQ

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school, and for telling us what you thought about it. You said that your school is getting better and better, and we agree. You are getting a satisfactory education and making more progress than you used to. The people who run the school are making it a better place to learn by finding out what needs to be improved, and then doing something about it.

Some of you, who find learning most difficult and get lots of support from adults, do well. You make better progress than we often see, because the adults who help you know exactly what to do to make sure you learn quickly. Some others of you, especially some of the boys, don't do as well as you should in mathematics. So, we have asked your teachers to make sure that you work hard all the time.

You are improving your writing more quickly now, but your progress in science and ICT is a bit slower. We have asked your teachers to give you more experiments to do, so that you can become better scientists. We have also asked the people who run the school to buy more computers, so that you can use them in more lessons. At the moment there is nobody in charge of science at the school so it's not getting better as quickly as other subjects. We have asked the people who run the school to put someone in charge so they can decide what needs doing first and then help you to learn more quickly in science. We were very impressed by how healthy you are. You eat good food and are very active. You told us that sometimes play can be a bit rough at lunchtimes, and we agree. So try to think about others when you are playing.

I wish you all the best for the future

Yours faithfully
David Driscoll

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